

Dr. Mees mentions one result of the revival of *capensis* Daudin—the reversion to *Strix longimembris* Jerdon, 1839 as the oldest specific name for the Grass Owls; this name is based on the Indo-Australian group, and must be used for the African subspecies by those who believe that all of these Grass Owls are conspecific. If considered a separate species, the African Grass Owls take the name *punctata* Lichtenstein 1854. Mees does *not* mention an additional result; the name *capensis* Daudin must probably be applied to one of the African Eagle Owls. If this name is found to be applicable to the form currently known as *Bubo capensis capensis* Smith, 1834, there will be no name change, only a change of authorship. However, someone must go to the trouble of deciding exactly which of the African Eagle Owls is Levaillant's "Le Grand Duc", upon which Daudin based his name; it should be noted that Sharpe (*Cat. Birds Brit. Mus.*, 2, 1875 : 27) called Daudin's bird "this doubtful Cape species." Should some scholar decide that *Strix Bubo capensis* Daudin is applicable to some Eagle Owl *other* than the one now called *capensis* Smith, the nomenclatorial chaos ensuing is frightening to contemplate. Clancey's proposal to suppress Daudin's name is clearly the logical and desirable means of attaining nomenclatorial stability in these owls.

COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED VALIDATION OF *STERNA TSCHEGRAVA*
AND *MOTACILLA PLESCHANKA* LEPECHIN, "1770". Z.N.(S.) 1784
(see volume 24, pages 60–62)

By Dean Amadon (*The American Museum of Natural History, New York, U.S.A.*)

I write to urge the Commission not to adopt the proposal of G. P. Dementiev, *et al.* that it use its plenary powers to establish the names *Sterna* [= *Hydroprogne*] *tschegrava* Lepechin for the bird usually known as the Caspian Tern and *Motacilla* [= *Oenanthe*] *pleschanka* Lepechin for the bird often known as the Pied Wheatear. As I have shown elsewhere (Amadon, 1966, *Ibis*, 108 : 424–425) and as is well known, Lepechin's paper is not consistently binominal and hence his names are not available under the Code.

The applicants apparently believe that Lepechin's names can be cited from the (anonymous!) "Summarium" at the beginning of the volume, in which they appeared, but the summary of Lepechin's paper given therein is no more binominal than the paper itself.

The earliest valid names for these two birds seem to be *Sterna caspia* and *Motacilla leucomela*, respectively, both proposed by Pallas in a paper in the same volume containing that of Lepechin. Pallas' names are given further authentication in the thirteenth edition of the *Systema Naturae*, 1788, where Gmelin adopted them and placed those of Lepechin in synonymy. Gmelin thus acted as "first reviser."

Vaurie (1966, *Ibis*, 108 : 633–634) has suggested that the papers in the "1770" volume might have been published separately, though the applicants now admit there is no evidence of this, and that Lepechin's contribution antedates that of Pallas. Since Lepechin's paper is non-binominal, this is irrelevant. Actually, as Mr. E. Eisenmann has pointed out to me, there is internal evidence that the volume was published as a whole; at the bottom of each page the first syllable of the following page is given; this is the case even when one passes from the *last page of one article* to the title page of the *one following*.

The question thus becomes—Should the Commission use its plenary powers to reject Pallas' valid names and to establish Lepechin's names? This would seem unnecessary. As regards the Caspian Tern, I have pointed out (*op. cit.*) that Pallas' name was used *exclusively* for *more than one hundred years* after its appearance; and in the ensuing period has been used at least as much as Lepechin's name.

The situation as regards the Pied Wheatear is less compelling. Nevertheless, Pallas' name was used in about two-thirds of the literature for more than a century after the bird was described; while Lepechin's name *was not used at all*, apparently, *with the exception of one publication* dated 1788. In more recent times Lepechin's

name has come into general but not exclusive use for this bird. Some works, such as the important *Handbook of British Birds*, continue to use the nomenclaturally correct name *Oenanthe leucomela* (Pallas).

This Pied Wheatear is one of about 18 species of the genus *Oenanthe*. It is not a species whose name appears often in non-ornithological literature. In the most influential ornithological work to appear in the U.S.S.R. in our times, the *Birds of the Soviet Union* (1951-1954), of which two of the applicants in this proposal, Dementiev and Gladkov, were editors and contributors, it is not given species status, but is treated as a subspecies of *Oenanthe hispanica* Linnaeus.

One assumes that the plenary powers should be invoked only when there is definitely something to be gained by doing so. In the present case, if any names were to be "suppressed", it should probably be those of Lepechin. But since they are invalid anyway, no exercise of plenary power would seem necessary, merely an admonition from the Commission that all authors use the correct names, those of Pallas.

COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF A NEOTYPE FOR
OPOSSITTA MARSHALLI IREDALE, 1946. Z.N.(S.) 1773

By H. J. deS. Disney (*The Australian Museum, Sydney, N.S.W.*)

It is considered that under Article 75 the author is wrong in proposing to set aside the holotype for a neotype. The type specimens or the original three specimens, although a bit worn, are still valid as types.

It is suggested that the correct procedure would be for the author to re-describe the bird fully from his topotypes and state very clearly where they are deposited and, if possible, a specimen or specimens should be where the types are held. If this proposal of the author is accepted it means that all slightly damaged types of birds or insects or any animal can be discarded for more perfect specimens.

By I. C. J. Galbraith (*British Museum (Natural History), London, England*)

This proposal is quite unnecessary, and if adopted would set an unfortunate precedent. Many, perhaps most, subspecies cannot be differentiated by reference to their holotypes alone. The type specimens are important mainly for establishing specific identity, and the type locality and the characters of the local population are more important for the discrimination of subspecies. Only if the type specimens disagreed with the characters of the population at the type locality would the "exceptional circumstances" necessary to the designation of a neotype exist. There is no suggestion that this is true of *Opopsitta diophthalma marshalli*. In any case, Article 75 makes no provision for the designation of a neotype, where the holotype still exists but is imperfect.

WITHDRAWAL OF THE PROPOSAL TO DESIGNATE A NEOTYPE UNDER
THE PLENARY POWERS FOR *OPOSSITTA MARSHALLI* IREDALE, 1946.
Z.N.(S.) 1773

(see volume 23, pages 283-284)

By Joseph M. Forshaw (*Division of Wildlife Research, C.S.I.R.O., Canberra, A.C.T., Australia*)

I refer to the above application in which I asked the Commission to use its plenary powers to set aside the holotype of *Opopsitta marshalli* Iredale, 1946, and recognize a neotype designated by me. The differences between *marshalli* and *Opopsitta diophthalma aruensis*, with which it had been synonymized by previous authors, were not apparent from examination of the holotype of *marshalli* as all distinguishing characters had been destroyed by pests.